

# Miles To Go

## South Carolina



Southern Education Foundation

SEF South Carolina Task Force and Advisory Committee



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## South Carolina

With Support From:

The Ford Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation



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## Aims and Auspices

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) is a regional public charity based in Atlanta, Georgia, that traces its roots back to 1867, when philanthropist George Peabody established a dedicated fund to advance education in the American South. This fund and several others were joined in 1937 to create SEF.

For 135 years, SEF has been at the forefront of efforts to improve educational opportunity and quality through policy advocacy, research, information sharing, convening, technical assistance, and program development and implementation. SEF does not make grants or receive unsolicited proposals and relies on donors of diverse types for support of its program activities. SEF's chairman is Dr. Norman Francis, president of Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Lynn Huntley, Esq. is its president.

*Miles to Go, South Carolina*, is one of a series of reports issued or under development by SEF as part of its Equal Opportunity in Post Secondary Desegregation Project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Begun in 1992, following the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *United States v. Fordice*, the Project undertakes research, disseminates information and works with policymakers to provide opportunity in higher education in the South. Prior reports issued by the Project include *Redeeming the American Promise* (1995), a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations about the status of

minorities in public higher education in 12 states; *Miles to Go* (1998), which looked at the status of Black students in all 19 states that formerly operated race-based dual systems of public higher education; and *Miles to Go, Maryland* (1999), an assessment of needs and strategies to enhance educational opportunity in that state. *Miles to Go, Arkansas*, another state-specific assessment of needs and strategies, will be released in the spring of 2002.

SEF thanks the many South Carolinians who gave of their time and talent to participate in the deliberations leading to this report and who will continue to play leadership roles in the state in shaping the public policy agenda for K-16 education reform. SEF also expresses appreciation to consultants Judith Winston and Art Coleman who, together with SEF program coordinator Steve Suits, bore primary responsibility for the development of the report.

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Copies of *Miles to Go: South Carolina* are available from the Southern Education Foundation, 135 Auburn Avenue, Second Floor, Atlanta, GA 30303-2503 for \$15.00 each while supplies last. An electronic version is available at [www.sefatl.org](http://www.sefatl.org).

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# foreword

**F**or more than two years, a task force of South Carolinians from diverse walks of life and the staff of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) have met together to review data and exchange ideas about how to create a world-class system of education at all levels in the State. The task force included public officials who, as part of their commitment to collaboration and accountability, shared information and their best judgment about goals, policies and strategies to enhance educational opportunity for all. It also included private individuals and institutions eager to advance equity and excellence in education. This report is the fruit of our shared labors. SEF is appreciative of the public spirit that has animated so many good people to give generously of their time and experience.

In recent years, South Carolina has done a lot to improve its educational system. There is a broad consensus that education is the linchpin upon which future progress toward economic prosperity, development and a good quality of life for all state residents rests. At all levels, South Carolina has begun to clarify expectations, promote accountability and broaden access. These are steps in the right direction.

Despite progress in some areas of education reform, the data we present here reveal the persistence of stubborn patterns of uneven investment in education and serious disparities in outcomes. Too many poor South Carolinians, including large numbers of African Americans, who pay taxes are being deprived of the type of education they need in order to earn livable wages, meet requirements of the technology-driven

workplace, participate fully and knowledgeably in civic life, and provide bright futures for themselves and their children. At all levels of the educational enterprise – from kindergarten through higher education – there are too many barriers that continue to retard, rather than advance, the broadening of educational opportunity and the attainment of excellence.

All South Carolinians deserve a chance to be all that they can be. What they can be must not be left to accidents of geography, race, ethnicity or class.

This report focuses on the status of efforts to help students who, through no fault of their own, are too often concentrated in under-funded, hard-to-staff and under-achieving public elementary and secondary schools. It raises important questions about the consequences of diverse school reform proposals on the well-being of such students. It explores the efficacy and adequacy of scholarship programs, strategies to promote student access to institutions of higher education, and efforts to promote diversity in the teacher force and among faculty, administrators and governing boards. It underscores the need for fresh thinking and structures to promote collaboration, cooperation, shared planning, and realignment of goals and practice, as well as more cost-effective use of monies among elementary, secondary and higher education institutions. In short, through its data, this report makes the case that the current array of worthy – but often piecemeal – programs serving the state's poor are inadequate if substantial progress is to be made to reduce inequality and improve education for all South Carolina's residents.



# foreword

SEF believes that fairness should be at the center of the education reform debate. Relegating equity to a back burner, failing to recognize its relationship to the well-being of the state of South Carolina as a whole, or taking only half-steps toward helping those people “stuck at the bottom” is a sure recipe for disappointing results.

This report suggests bedrock goals and strategies to promote fairness in educational opportunity. It calls on people of goodwill who love South Carolina to embrace bold measures. Unless the state extends a helping hand through more equity-oriented public policy and reform, it will not realize the full measure of its greatness nor attain the level of economic prosperity and development it desires or its people deserve.

South Carolina has difficult choices to make at this crossroads time of lean resources and many needs. Through this report, we seek to inform a broad array of stakeholders, in and out of government, about the unfinished business of undoing inequality in education in the state. We hope to add value to the policymaking process and contribute to the formulation of corrective actions that will help ensure a prosperous, shared and workable future for all South Carolinians.

Lynn Huntley  
President  
The Southern Education Foundation  
March 2002



## Education is the Key to a Strong Economy

The revolution in technology is transforming the world, placing new demands on institutions of education to provide higher quality and levels of education for all students, including growing numbers of adults in need of more sophisticated skills. States that have well-educated, productive workers can provide a quality of life that attracts and retains both business and investment. States that are committed to building a broader consumer and tax base through improving educational opportunity have a decided edge over places with deep poverty and inequality, divided communities, a burgeoning prison population, and large numbers of low-skilled workers. If ever there was a time for South Carolinians to come together to extend and improve educational opportunities for *all* the state's residents, that time is **now**.

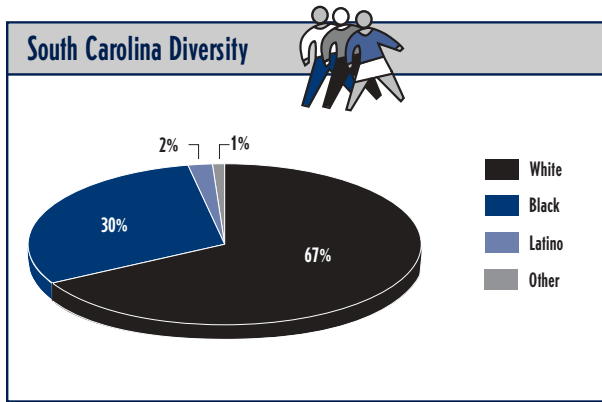
Some South Carolinians are well served by the current educational system and equipped to compete and excel in the skills-driven, globalizing economic marketplace. Others face bleak economic prospects because of limited education and skills.

This report focuses primarily on the people at the bottom of educational and economic opportunity in the state. It suggests key strategies, goals and directions that should be pursued to enhance the quality of education and to make educational and economic opportunity more equal.

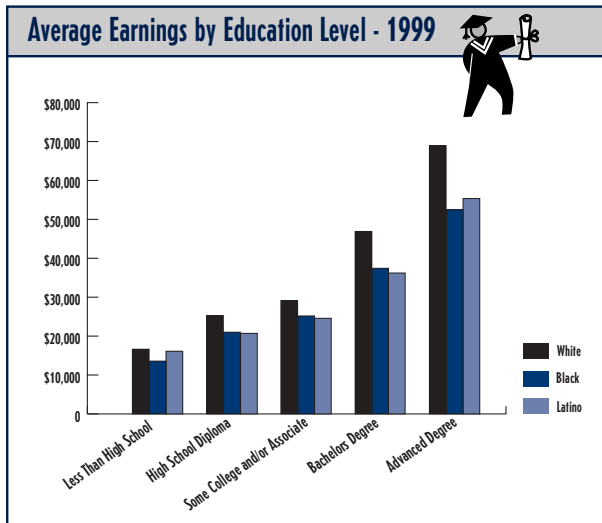
strong economy

# diversity

## Who We Are: The Reality of Diversity



Percentages rounded; race and ethnicity add up differently.



Mean Yearly Earnings for Workers 18 years old and over.

African Americans and members of other minority groups comprise 32 percent of South Carolina's overall population and 40 percent of its school age population. Though not yet evident in great numbers, the state's Latino population is also growing. Demographers project that the number of minority group residents in South Carolina and in its schools will increase markedly, and that in the next decade, members of minority groups will comprise a growing percentage of the workforce.

South Carolina is a state with a deep divide between affluent and poor people. It ranks 41 among the 50 states in terms of per capita personal income. Most of the state's lower-income residents, a disproportionately large number of whom are African American, have low levels of education.

For all people and all states, education is the cornerstone of upward mobility, a livable wage, and economic and business development. This report is a snapshot of aspects of the educational system in South Carolina at all levels. It examines the extent to which current policy and practice are effectively assisting those who most need the help a better education can bring.



## K-12 Education: Miles to Go

Nearly 670,000 students in 86 school districts fill the classrooms of South Carolina's public elementary and secondary schools:

- Fifty-five percent of the state's students are White, and 42 percent are African American.\*
- Approximately 46 percent of all students are poor or near-poor.
- Approximately 16 percent of the state's teachers are African American.

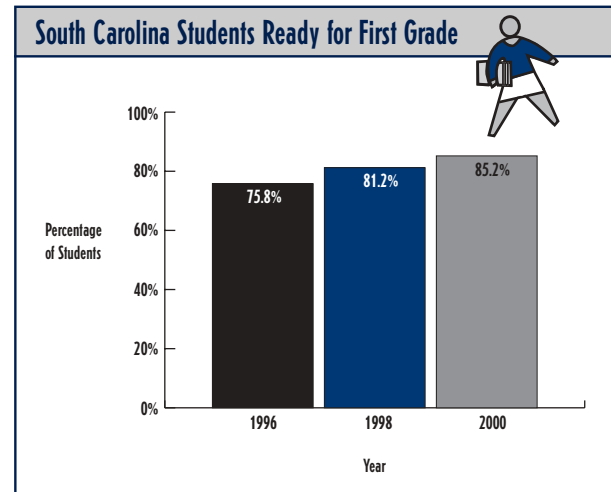
### Student Readiness and Test Scores are Improving

Scores on standardized tests for entering first-grade students in South Carolina since 1996 reflect a steady, 10-percentage-point gain in student readiness for school.

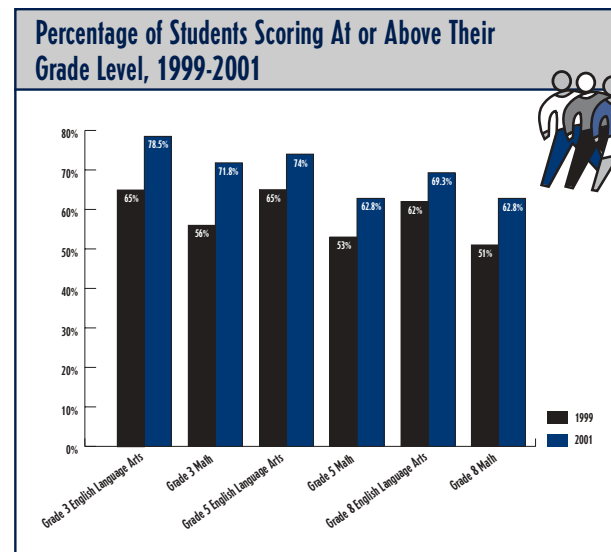
Other state-administered tests also show a steady march toward higher achievement levels. The Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) is a measure of student learning aligned with state standards. The percentages of students passing PACT at various grade levels in mathematics and English have risen across South Carolina's elementary and middle schools.

However, while acknowledging improvement in test scores among South Carolina students, State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum notes: "Too many South Carolina schools still have too many students scoring at Below Basic levels" on the PACT. Moreover, one-third of all 10th graders fails at least one part of the high school exit examination on the first attempt. A comparable number of students drop out of high school.

\* "African American" and "Black" are used as the same terms of racial identity in this report since sources use one or the other term. "Minority" refers to all persons in racial groups other than "Whites" as well as persons who are grouped as "Latino" in ethnicity.



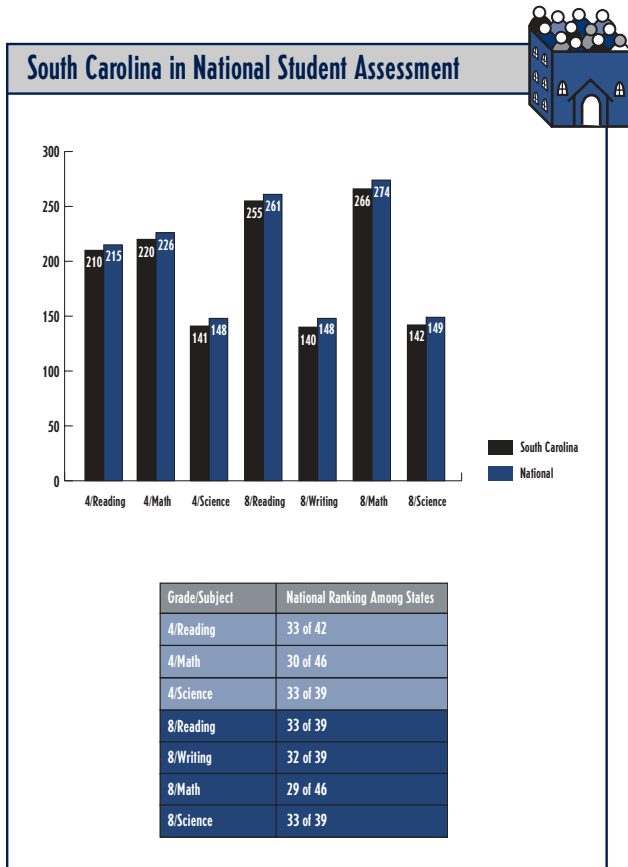
Students Meeting Standard on the CSAB



Students scoring Basic or Above on PACT, 1999-2001

# K-12 education

# assessment



NAEP test scale scores for latest years: Reading and Writing = 1998; Math and Science = 2000

South Carolina students also continue to lag behind their peers in most other states. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – frequently referred to as the “nation’s report card” – South Carolina’s average scores on 4th and 8th grade tests remain significantly behind other states despite recent improvements. In all student scores, South Carolina placed in the bottom half of national rankings.

- South Carolina – unlike eight other Southern states – failed to meet or exceed the national average in the percentage of students who scored at or above a proficient level in at least one of the four NAEP tests (math, reading, science and writing).
- While South Carolina’s rate of high school graduation is now near the national average, the state’s average SAT and ACT scores indicate as a rough measure that the average student in South Carolina is not as college-ready as the average US student. South Carolina also continues to fall behind most, if not all, southern states with respect to average SAT scores.

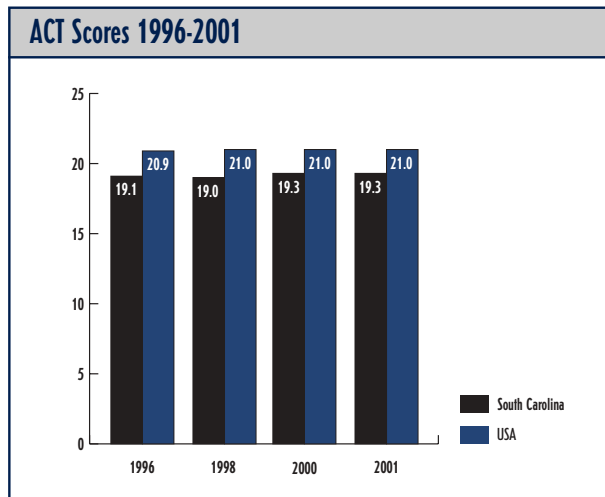
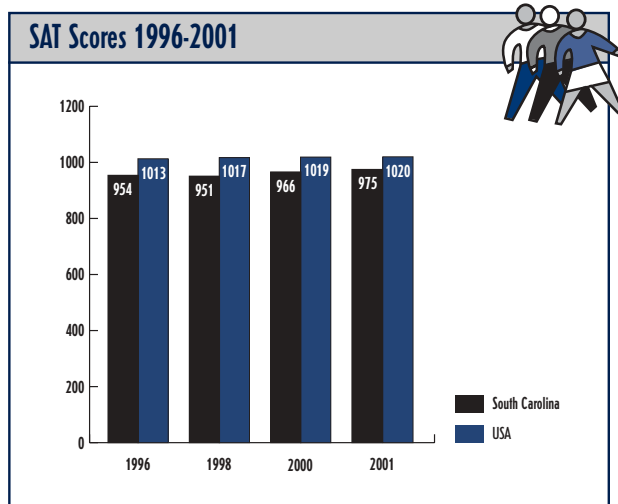
High school exit examinations show general improvement in student learning since 1986.

- In 2000, four-fifths of all 10th graders met the reading standard; three-fourths met the math standard; and 86.6 percent met the writing standard.
- Two-thirds of the 10th graders taking the test for the first time passed all three tests.

### More Have High School Diplomas

- During the 1990s, the number of South Carolina adults with a high school diploma increased by almost 15 percent, a significantly larger gain than the national average for that period of time. A substantial number of these adults were educated in South Carolina schools.
- Today, 83 percent of South Carolina's adults have a high school education, compared to a national average of 84 percent.

The general picture painted above through charts and text tells a story of modest progress toward improvement of educational opportunity, quality and outcomes in South Carolina. Unfortunately, these and other advances become decidedly less impressive when the data is disaggregated by income and race.



diplomas

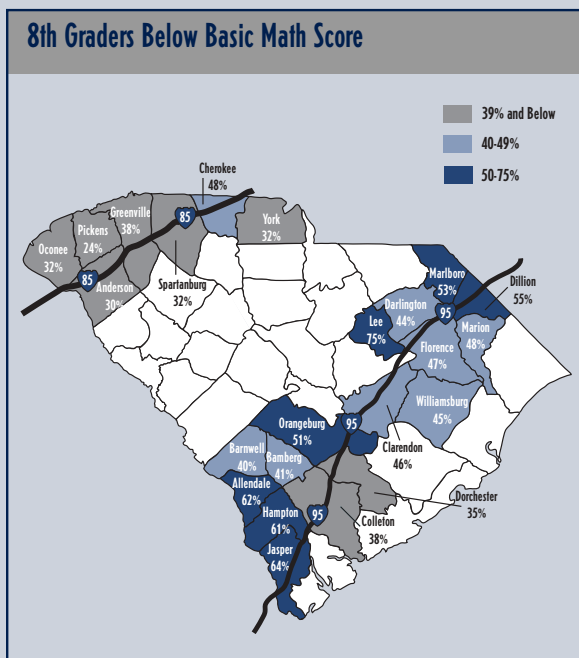
# expenditures

## K-12: Uneven and Inadequate Expenditures

### A Tale of Two Highways

The two interstate highways crossing South Carolina – I-85 and I-95 – do not intersect, either literally or figuratively, in this state. Both roadways were built on hopes of increasing prosperity, but only one has delivered that promise to those who live alongside its corridors. The I-95 corridor represents half the population living alongside I-85, but twice the unemployment and demonstrably higher rates of poverty.

The disparities between South Carolina's two interstate corridors are perhaps most vivid when examining education. This map suggests a simple, but very important truth to remember: roads are seldom the pathways to prosperity. Quite literally, education lays the groundwork for today's superhighways – including the information highway. Education remains the essential infrastructure for economic progress.



Percent of 8th grade students scoring below basic competence on PACT math tests by county, 2000; percentage rounded to whole numbers.

There are wide disparities in the amounts of money and other resources available for children's education in South Carolina. Schools with large numbers of low-income or minority students, on average, receive and spend less money on the education of students than their predominantly White and/or more affluent counterparts.

- According to a recent national study by the Washington, DC-based Education Trust, school districts with the highest levels of poverty in South Carolina have \$427 less to spend on each child's education than do the state's districts with the lowest levels of poverty. This average applies to districts with predominantly White poor children as well as Black. This gap means that each year the high-poverty districts have \$10,675 less to spend on each classroom of 25 children.
- Today the 12th grade student in a high-poverty district has received a public education worth approximately \$1.5 million *less* than the public education of a child being educated in a low-poverty district elsewhere in South Carolina.\*
- Regardless of income, school districts with high percentages of African American students have \$313 fewer state and local dollars to spend on each student than those districts with the lowest levels of African American enrollment. This inequity translates into a gap of about \$8,000 a year for a typical classroom, and more than a million dollars in the schools that the average child attends during her 12 years of public education in districts with a large proportion of African American children.

\* The calculation is based on a \$427 difference per child who attends schools with an average of 300 students over 12 years.

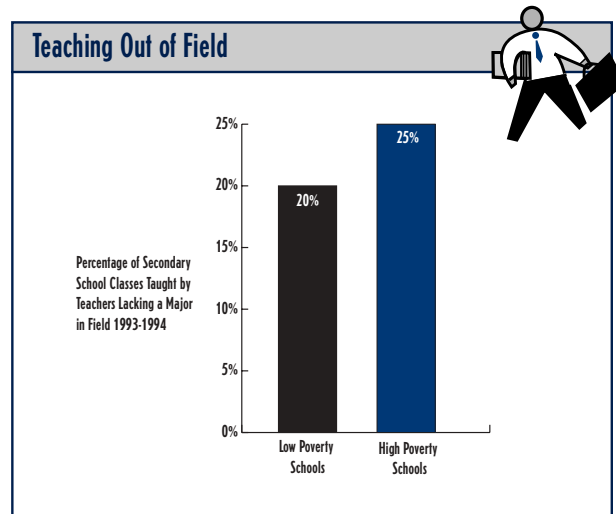
### Too Many Under-Qualified and “Out of Field” Teachers

Twenty-five percent of students in South Carolina schools with high levels of poverty in 1993-94 were taught by teachers who lacked a major or minor in their field of instruction. In schools with low levels of poverty, the rate was 20 percent. On this issue, South Carolina ranks 40th among the states. The practice of relying on “out of field” teachers, whether in high- or low-income schools, is problematic, but it is especially harmful in low-performing schools with many needs. The necessity of relying on such teachers to the degree described above speaks to a serious crisis in teacher preparation that the state must address.

Low average salaries in South Carolina compound the problem by impeding the ability of school districts to attract well-qualified personnel.

- For the year 1999-2000, South Carolina ranked 11th out of 16 Southern states in teacher salaries. South Carolina's average teacher salary of \$36,091 was more than \$3,000 below the average in North Carolina and almost \$5,000 less than the average in Georgia.
- South Carolina's average is also well below the national average salary of \$41,724.

As long as South Carolina pays its teachers at non-competitive levels, it will continue to experience teacher shortages and quality problems.



*“You can’t teach what you don’t know any more than you can come back from where you ain’t been.... In the nation’s poorest schools where hiring is most lax and teacher turnover is constant, the results can be disastrous. Thousands of children are taught throughout their school careers by a parade of teachers without preparation in the fields they teach, inexperienced beginners with little training and no mentoring, and short-term substitutes trying to cope with constant staff disruptions. It is more surprising that some of these children manage to learn than that so many fail to do so.”*

*“What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future,” quoting Will Rogers, in Summary Report of the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (1996)*

# out of field

# college prep

## Latino Education in South Carolina

Latinos make up only a small percentage of South Carolina's student population. They are 1.5 percent of the state's public school children in grades K-12 and barely over one percent of the students enrolled in the state's public colleges and universities. In some parts of the state, primarily along the coast and in Greenville, Latino students are a larger part of the student population.

On the latest state-administered PACT tests, measuring students who were "proficient" or "advanced" in English and mathematics, Latino children in the 3rd grade scored behind White students. However, the size of the disparity grows by the 8th grade. For example, only 13.5 percent of Latino 8th-graders were proficient or advanced in mathematics, while 27 percent of White students scored at that level. Generally, however, Latino students scored higher than African American students in the same grade in both English and mathematics.

*"The General Assembly is constitutionally required to provide the opportunity for each child to receive a minimally adequate education...[which includes:]*

- The ability to read, write and speak the English language, and knowledge of mathematics and physical science;*
- A fundamental knowledge of economic, social, and political systems, and of history and governmental processes; and*
- Academic and vocational skills."*

*Abbeville County School District et al. v. State of South Carolina*

## Inadequate College Preparatory Courses

Too many African American and poor students in low-income schools are discouraged from pursuing academic, college preparatory classes. The dearth of advanced placement courses in low-income schools also contributes to inadequate preparation of such students for college-level work.

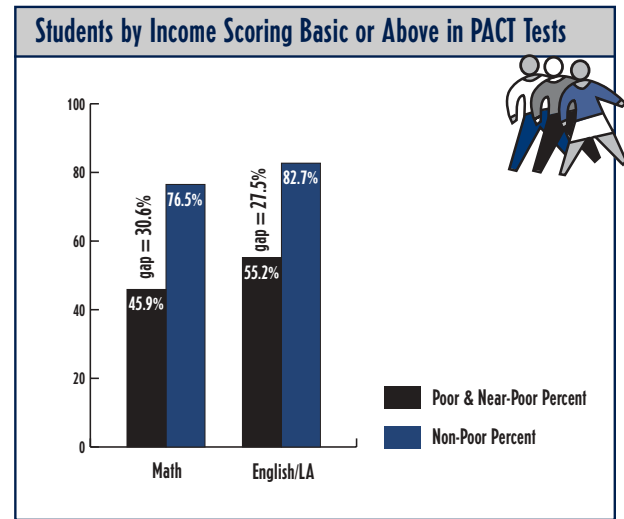
- In 1996, 34 percent of South Carolina's White 8th-graders were taking algebra, while only 20 percent of African American students had such challenging curriculum.
- In the same year, teachers who were math majors taught 46 percent of the state's White students in 8th-grade math classes, but only 37 percent of African American 8th-graders were as fortunate.
- Rates of participation in advanced placement courses show significant White/Black disparities: of advanced placement test takers in English composition, 11.6 percent were Black and 83.7 percent were White; in Calculus, 12.9 percent were Black and 81.3 percent were White; and in Biology, 10.2 percent were Black and 82.1 percent were White.

### Test Scores and Educational Attainment Are Still Too Low

The NAEP report cards show that students receiving free or reduced lunches (“poor and near-poor”) are far behind other students in mastering all subjects – reading, writing, math, and science. For example:

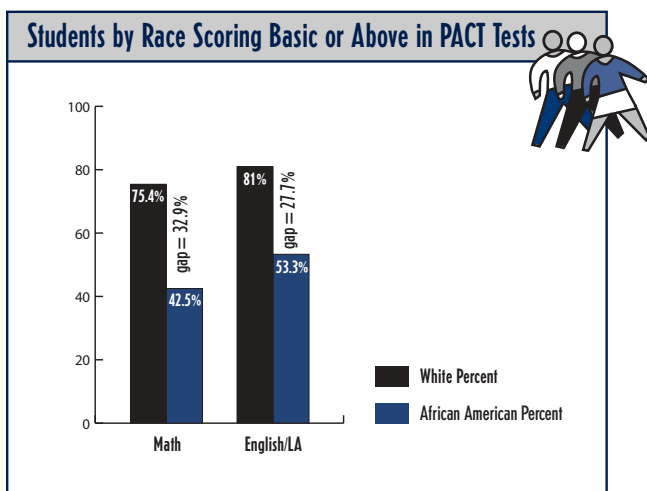
- Only 9 percent of South Carolina’s poor and near-poor 8th-grade students scored “proficient or advanced” in reading in 1998, while 29 percent of students from middle-class and affluent families scored proficient or better.
- In science, only 8 percent of the poorer 8th-graders scored at a high level, in contrast to 31 percent of the remaining students.

This equity gap is confirmed in the results of South Carolina’s own state-administered tests. In 2000, students receiving free or reduced lunches scored far below other students in both parts of the PACT tests. In math, for example, only 46 percent of the poorer students scored “basic or above,” while 77 percent of non-poor students scored at these levels. These gaps seem to be narrowing slightly, but test-score differences by income remain enormous.



# test scores

# by race



Race in South Carolina often marks even larger disparities in performance:

- White 8th-graders were three times more likely to score high on reading than were Blacks.
- White 8th-graders were eight-and-one-half times more often ranked as high achievers on science tests than were Black 8th-graders.
- By nearly 10 percentage points, young White students are more often ready to begin first grade than African Americans.
- A White student in South Carolina is over four times as likely to be placed in a gifted and talented program as an African American student.
- White students in South Carolina are over seven times more likely to take AP Calculus or English Composition than African-American students.
- Only 43 percent of African American students scored a passing grade on the math section of the PACT in 2000, compared to three-fourths of all White students.

These statistics have a real, specific meaning for individual students in South Carolina if they happen to be born to parents who are poor or who have a darker skin color. Generally speaking, it appears that an 8th-grade student who is poor or Black in South Carolina is on average two to three years behind other students in test score assessments of



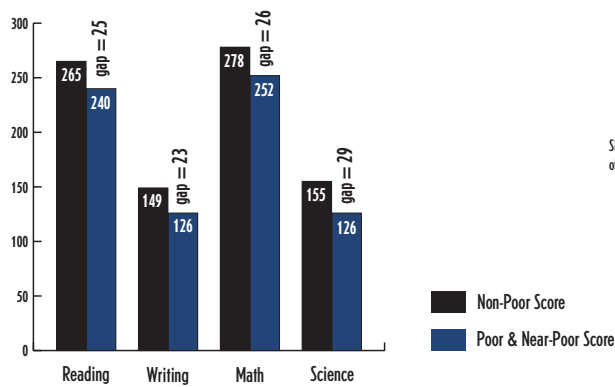
## Gaps in Years of Learning by Income and Race

Average Score by Income and Race for 8th Grade Students on NAEP Tests

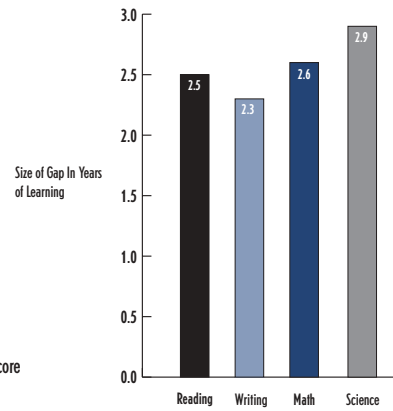


### Gaps in Years of Learning by Income

#### Average Score

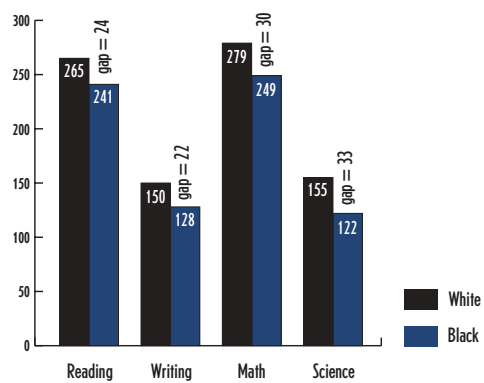


#### Gap in Years

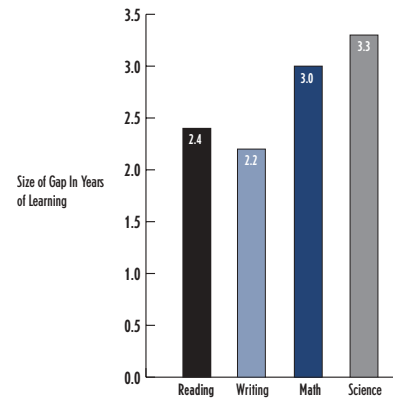


### Gaps in Years of Learning by Race

#### Average Score



#### Gap in Years

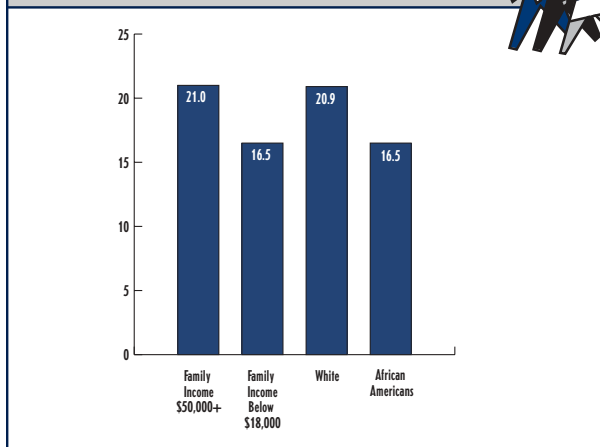


Years reading & writing=1998; science & math=2000.

gaps

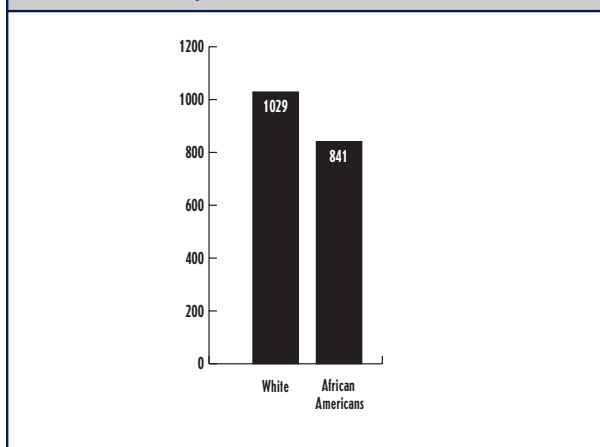
# testing

**ACT Test Results By Income and Race**



Year: 2001

**SAT Test Results By Race**



Year: 2001

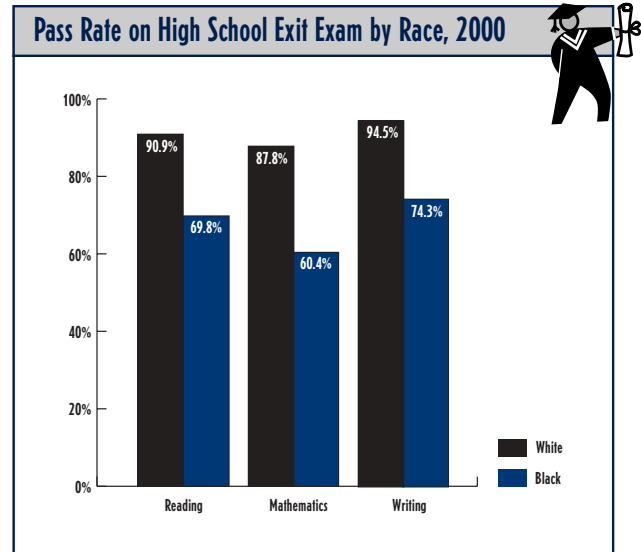
learning attainment. According to education scholars, a 10-point difference in the average NAEP score is an approximate measure of a one year difference in school-based learning. On this basis, the average 8th-grader who receives a free lunch at school is 2.9 years behind the more well-to-do student in knowledge of science. By the same measurement, the average Black student is three years behind the White student in science.

These racial and income-related disparities continue through high school. The percentage of White students passing all three parts of the exit exam significantly exceeded that of African American students in 2000. In addition, the high school dropout rate for African American male students is 37.5 percent, but 29.4 percent for White male students. Both dropout rates are unacceptably high in a state aspiring to have a world-class system of education.

These cumulative deficits in educational opportunity result in disparities in SAT scores. White college-bound students in 2001 averaged 1029 on the SAT, compared to an average of 841 for African Americans taking the test. There has been no decrease in this gap over the last decade. The ACT tests show a similarly significant gap.

### K-12 Summing Up

Inadequate and uneven patterns of expenditure on K-12 education for low-income and African American students are resulting in low levels of educational attainment, failure to meet standards, and high dropout rates. The lack of adequate college preparatory courses in low-income schools and the concentration of out-of-field teachers in low-achieving schools are consigning low-income and minority-group students to an unequal and inferior education in South Carolina. The pipeline into higher educational opportunity is too narrow. South Carolina can and must do better.



the future

# higher education

## Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a pivotal role in the higher education of African Americans, especially in the Southern states. For several generations these were the only institutions where young African Americans could gain an education beyond high school in the South. Operating with scarce resources and very large challenges, HBCUs gave the South's black youth a chance for the American promise of education during decades when the Southern states actively opposed equal opportunities in higher education for all citizens. Today in South Carolina there are eight HBCUs, both private and state-supported. They continue to play a major role in educating the state's African American youth. In 2000, for example, 26 percent of all African American undergraduates in South Carolina were enrolled in these eight institutions.

In addition, these eight HBCUs in 1996 employed almost half of all the full-time African American faculty members teaching in the state's colleges and universities. In the 1998 regional report, *Miles To Go*, SEF stated: "HBCUs remain essential to providing access for large numbers of black students.... In building desegregated and opportunity-driven systems of public higher education, states must invest in these institutions and their students." No less is true in 2002.

## Higher Education Today

South Carolina has 33 public colleges and universities and 28 private colleges serving over 156,000 students, most of whom are undergraduates. Sixteen schools are two-year technical colleges. There are also five two-year regional campuses to University of South Carolina, Columbia. Four schools are two-year, private colleges.

The problems of education associated with income and race persist for students into college. According to a recent national study, the average rate of college participation for high school graduates from low-income families in South Carolina is 19.6 percent – ranking the state 34th in the nation. These low rates result from several factors.

- Tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities in South Carolina account for 9.6 percent of the state's median household income – a considerably more burdensome public college expense than the average of 7.2 to 7.7 percent of household incomes in other states across the South.
- Also, in recent years the state has lagged far behind the nation and the region in providing financial aid in comparison to federally measured need (although the state lottery funds may improve this pattern). In 1999, for example, South Carolina's own financial aid amounted to only 24 percent of the financial need (measured by federal Pell grants distributed in the state), while the average was 51 percent in the US and 38 percent in the South.
- Higher education funding in the state also has failed to keep pace with national and regional levels. Per student funding for higher education in South Carolina fell by \$130 between 1995 and 2000, compared to an average rise of \$40 per student across the South.

### **African Americans on College Faculties**

Only 8.6 percent of South Carolina's faculty in public colleges and universities were African American in the fall of 2000. (Data for private schools were unavailable.) Among the state's four-year colleges and universities African Americans were seven percent. When one school, South Carolina State University, an historically Black college, is removed from the list, the level of Black faculty in public four-year schools dropped to below 4 percent.

African Americans also comprise less than five percent of the tenured faculty of all four-year public colleges in the state. Again, when South Carolina State is removed from consideration, African Americans are less than two percent of the tenured faculties at South Carolina's four-year public colleges: only 44 out of a total of 2,664 tenured teachers. In addition, in the year 2000 there was only one African American tenured professor teaching at the five regional campuses of the University of South Carolina.

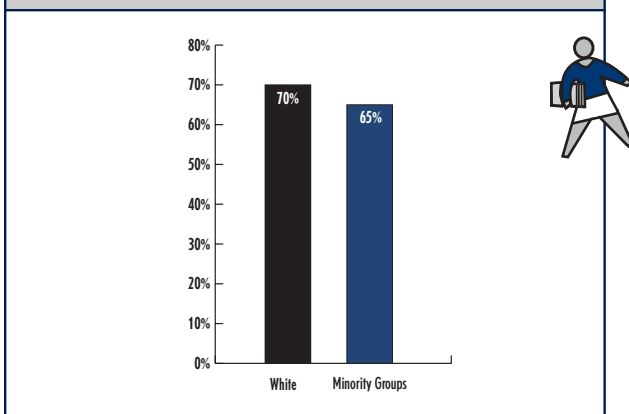
These figures are compelling evidence of how far the state must go in order to have a truly inclusive and diverse higher educational system. It is also an argument for the state to invest in strengthening historically Black colleges and universities.



faculties

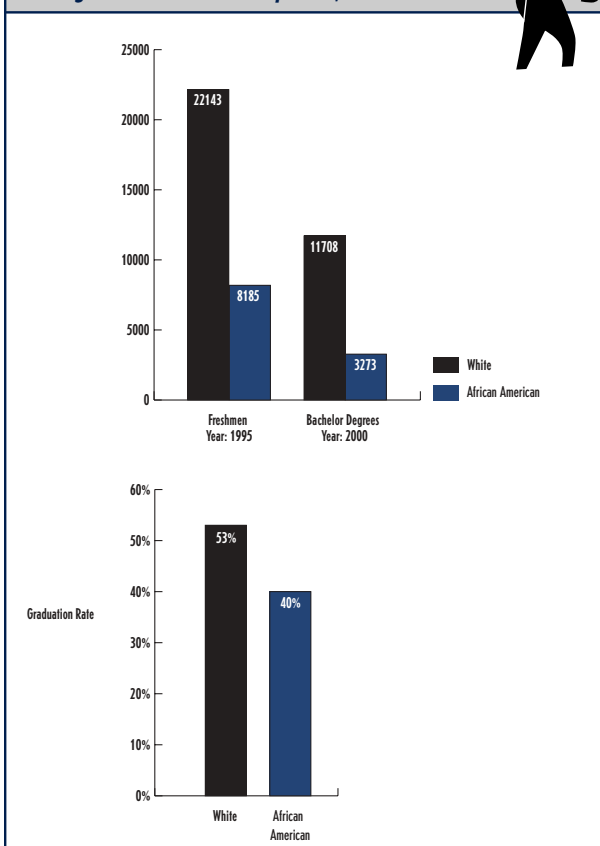
# graduation

**College Retention Rate, 1999-2000 Freshman to Sophomore Year**



Minority Groups include all groups but Whites.

**College Graduation Rate By Race, 2000**



Rate based on 5-year graduation cycle, not 6 years, due to available data.

## College Attendance and Graduation

In the fall of 2000, 25 percent of the 135,000 undergraduates at South Carolina's public colleges and universities were African American. This rate of Black enrollment for undergraduates ranged from a low of seven percent at Clemson and eight percent at the Citadel to 96 percent at South Carolina State and 94 percent at Denmark Tech, another historically Black college.

Overall, college enrollment for Black students in South Carolina has increased by 20 percent in the last eight years – far exceeding the rate of growth for Black enrollment in the South and the nation. The college retention rate for South Carolina freshmen in 2000 was 70 percent for Whites and approximately 65 percent for African Americans. The lowest levels of African American retention – just above 50 percent – were found on two regional campuses of the University of South Carolina.

Retention of African Americans persists as a larger problem beyond the sophomore year. As an example, by June 2000, approximately 40 percent of the African Americans in the freshman class of 1995 (public and private colleges) had graduated with a bachelor's degree – in contrast to 53 percent of their White classmates. The graduation rate for African American male students was only 33 percent.

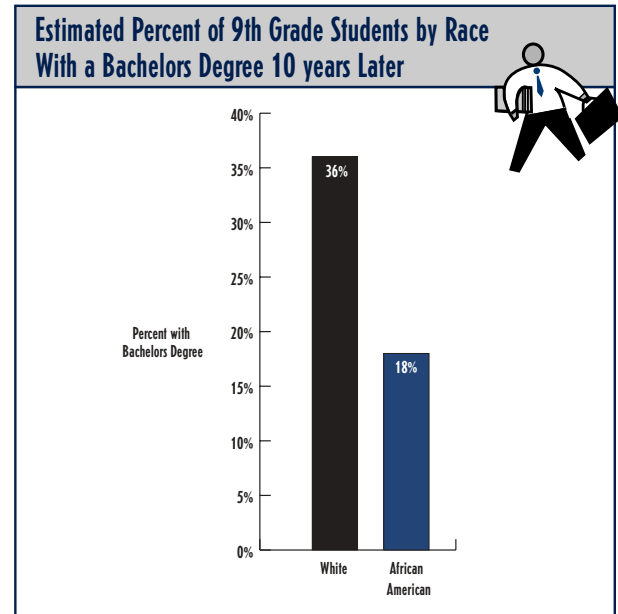
In June 2000, 72 percent of the bachelor's degrees in South Carolina colleges went to White students and 20 percent went to African Americans. Only 12 percent of the master's degrees, 11 percent of doctoral degrees and eight percent of professional degrees went to Blacks.

### K-16 Summing Up

The cumulative effects of the various barriers and problems in the state's educational system are more evident – and more evidently far-reaching – when education is measured in the real terms of a child's school life.

- In 1990, for instance, there were roughly 52,000 students in the 9th grade in South Carolina's public schools. Ten years later, in the fall of 2000, after four years in which to complete high school and six years to earn a degree, only 16,500 students graduated with a bachelor's degree in South Carolina's public colleges and universities – an approximate rate of 32 percent.
- The estimates further show that 36 percent of South Carolina's 1990 White 9th graders had received a four-year degree by 2000. African American students in the 9th grade class of 1990 were not so fortunate. Their rate of college graduation was 18 percent, half the White rate.

These data demonstrate that problems associated with poverty and race in South Carolina's educational system are cumulative. They cannot be accurately isolated to one grade, one school, or even one segment of the whole educational system from kindergarten to college. The real achievements and failures of South Carolina's public education are experienced by students – and must be assessed by policy makers and educators – over the course of a child's entire education, not merely one phase of it.



Estimates based on 35 percent African American and 62 percent Whites in student population in 9th grade Class of 1990

degrees

# moving forward

*“We have miles to go before we reach our goal of equity in higher education. The road ahead will without doubt continue to be difficult. Navigating it successfully will require both a heightened sense of urgency about the importance of our pursuit and an abiding patience to persist in it. For the South – and for the nation – there can be no turning back.”*

*“Miles to Go”*

*Southern Education Foundation, p. 57 (1998)*

## The Way Forward

South Carolina must focus with urgency and intensity on finding comprehensive and more effective ways of significantly reducing the gross disparities in educational opportunity with which the state is now burdened. Part of the solution to the inequality is to provide adequate funding for and promote replication of many worthy, successful efforts now underway to improve teaching, student performance, parental involvement in education, planning, assessment and accountability. The task force has uncovered an impressive array of such efforts, too numerous to list. Another important part of the solution to inequality in educational opportunity is to mount specific, vigorous efforts of the type and in the areas set forth below.

The task force recommends that South Carolina

- **create an effective, seamless, comprehensive K-16 system** by reinventing educational structures to promote communication, coordination, and interaction at all levels of the educational spectrum, from kindergarten through higher education, and developing a comprehensive approach to reform;
- **devise and implement strategies to ensure that all students are able to meet high standards.** Such strategies will involve increasing the quality and qualifications of teachers in under-performing schools;
- **ensure that need-based scholarships are available to all poor South Carolinians for access to and success in four-year as well as two-year institutions of higher education;** and
- **recruit, train, retain and increase significantly the number of African American teachers, faculty, administrators and governing board members.**



The task force has developed specific recommendations in each of these areas. If implemented, these recommendations hold the promise of greater academic achievement for all students. By enacting new and revising existing legislation, as well as supporting institutional and state agency initiatives and programs, policymakers can promote positive changes that will propel South Carolina into a leadership position in education and economic well-being in the 21st century.

### **I. Create an Effective, Seamless, Comprehensive K-16 System**

At the center of all efforts to improve equity in education must be a commitment to reinventing educational structures. Each sector of education – elementary and secondary, two-year and four-year colleges and universities – is linked to the others; what happens to students on one level affects, negatively or positively, what happens at the next. Each level is the building block upon which student advancement at the next level rests.

The structure of education in South Carolina is not organized to maximize joint planning, assessment, administration, goal setting, monitoring and implementation system-wide at all levels. Rather, the current structure in South Carolina – from kindergarten through higher education – is fractured. At each level and jurisdiction, there may be separate structures, expectations, diverse capabilities and differing mandates that govern policy, practice and outcomes.

As a result, an ethos of competition, rather than cooperation, is often created. Opportunities to replicate and expand successful programs are lost. And all along the way, the children, their families, the communities – the state – are the

losers, as talented young people, ill served by the educational status quo, drop out or fail to meet standards.

Education is a state function. If South Carolina takes seriously its obligation and self-interest and wants to build an effective, opportunity-driven system of education, it must strengthen connections between and among all levels of the educational system. The types of systemic changes needed to transform the educational system in South Carolina will not happen as long as the pattern of fragmentation exists. It is a matter of leadership.

The task force is mindful that the state's economy, like the nation's, faces much uncertainty in 2002. However, the task force recommends earmarking a portion of the lottery funds to create a coordinating mechanism to address the disjuncture in function and operation among the diverse components of South Carolina's public education system. There are models of such initiatives – P-16 Councils in Georgia, and Partnerships for Teaching and Learning K-16, in Maryland, to name a few. These states' successful models furnish a point of departure for a similar effort in South Carolina.

Furthermore, the task force encourages the state to continue to reach out to the business community, the non-profit sector, citizen groups and other stakeholder groups to tap into their expertise and knowledge about the linkage between workforce development and education. Collaboration between the diverse levels of the educational enterprise will also benefit from such outreach.

The problems that the state faces are deep and wide. The solutions must be of commensurate scope.

## II. Devise and Implement Strategies to Ensure That All Students Are Able to Meet High Standards

The standards movement sweeping the nation is evident in South Carolina. It is a good thing. “If you don’t know where you want to go, you won’t know when you get there,” the old saying goes. There is a need for clarity in expectations about the core competencies teachers and students must have and about ways to document and promote best practices.

The task force calls on the state to embrace an “equal opportunity standard.” The task force is aware of litigation in South Carolina that has raised troubling questions related to uneven educational quality and funding. In light of this litigation, the task force believes that South Carolina’s executive and legislative branches should seize the initiative to address the issues presented so as to minimize, if not eliminate, the need for continuing judicial intervention or oversight of educational opportunity in South Carolina. Litigation is a blunt and often ineffectual means of developing public policy. The task force urges state leadership to take a proactive stance and use the occasion provided by the litigation to do what should be done to ensure equity and adequacy in educational funding and opportunity.

The standards movement raises several key issues that the task force believes should receive prioritized attention:

- **Teacher recruitment, preparation, retention, professional development and support.** If the state is to have a world-class system of education at all levels, serious attention must be focused on teaching, teachers and ways to improve the quality of both. Accordingly, the quality of teacher education programs and in-service training programs must be assessed, and improvement strategies must be identified and funded in order to deepen competencies and strengthen

teacher skills. Professional licensure and development issues must be examined, including failure rates, strategies to prepare prospective teachers for success on standardized tests, and financial incentives adequate to attract “the best and the brightest” into teaching.

- **Use of out-of-field and unlicensed teachers, especially in low-performing schools.** The task force highly recommends that South Carolina develop guidelines or standards with regard to the use of “out of field” and unlicensed teachers in under-performing schools. The goal must be to ameliorate, if not eliminate, the evident pattern of providing the children who need help the most with the least-qualified teachers.
- **Use of high-stakes tests and the need for sustained and equitable investments in low-performing schools.** Use of tests to measure levels of student achievement would be fine, if
  - all students had an opportunity to learn the content covered by the tests;
  - below standard scores were used primarily for provision of intensive and sustained support to help students “catch up”; and
  - advanced placement and other types of academic course offerings were as readily available in schools serving low-income students, as they are schools serving more affluent students.

Testing can stigmatize students with failing grades, denial of diplomas, or ability grouping that exacerbates failure and dropout rates, rather than success. When used in this way, standardized testing can be both unfair and counterproductive.

In recent years the state has begun to develop intervention strategies to address deficiencies in underachieving schools. These efforts should be significantly expanded in light of what is known about the prevalence of low-performing schools in South Carolina.

### **III. Enhance Access of Low-Income and Minority Students to Higher Education by Fully Funding Need-Based Scholarships**

The data demonstrate the need for greater and more sustained outreach efforts and more financial aid to increase the number of poor and minority group students admitted to two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Too much talent is being wasted.

This need goes far beyond simply having more diverse student bodies by class, race and ethnicity. The fundamental need for this outreach is to reduce group-identifiable disparities in education and economic well-being; to ensure that the state has an adequate teacher force in the future; to promote access of poor and minority group residents to professional careers; and to enhance the quality of life for all of the people of South Carolina.

The state's recent step toward fully funding access by all qualified persons to two-year institutions of higher education is a major step in the right direction. By taking this step, South Carolina's leaders have recognized how need-based scholarships can inspire and enable low-income students to seek higher education. The task force is hopeful that the new effort will broaden the number of African Americans and other low-income people able to receive education after high school.

The task force is aware that there are many uses to which lottery funds may be put, but there is no higher use than to address fairness in educational access. Various two- and four-year institutions have put articulation agreements in place to promote transfer opportunities for students in two-year institutions. By fully funding need-based scholarships and monitoring "articulation agreements" to be sure they achieve their aim, the state can significantly open up the talent flow into four-year institutions.

The task force is concerned that without adequate provision of counseling services, many low-income high-school students who pursue education at two- and four-year institutions may, if the past is a portent of the future, fail to receive degrees. Without need-based scholarship aid for four-year institutions, many students may not take advantage of transfer/articulation agreements. Hence, the task force recommends that state policymakers adopt

- guidelines to govern both recruitment and retention efforts for low-income students to ensure that two-year institutions achieve high levels of educational attainment and graduation rates;
- criteria for remedial courses to promote alignment of what is taught in two-year institutions with requirements for successful transfer/matriculation at four-year institutions.

The task force strongly recommends full funding of need-based scholarships to enable larger numbers of poor and minority group students to attend four-year institutions by transfer or direct admission. Full funding will not be easy, but it is necessary if the state is to meet workforce

requirements for an expanding economy in the future. The failure to provide full funding for need-based scholarships to four-year institutions may result in the re-creation of a dual and racially identifiable system of higher education in the state.

Finally, the task force recommends a review of the adequacy of performance funding measures and data collection and use. Although such measures are in place with regard to diversity, there are still many institutions that are not as inclusive as they should or could be. A recalibration of the criteria and other monitoring mechanisms, including issues related to incentives and sanctions, seems to be in order.

#### **IV. Improve and Promote Diversity in Staffing and Governance at All Levels of the Educational System**

The demographics of South Carolina point to a state that is becoming more rather than less diverse. Finding ways to bring people of different backgrounds, races and ethnicity, levels of education, and expectations together to advance shared goals is an important undertaking.

The task force believes that it is critically important for the educational institutions in the state to be broadly representative of all South Carolinians. Having a diverse and inclusive educational system at all levels

- sends a welcoming signal to people, groups and institutions who may not otherwise feel that the education system is there for *them*;
- helps to ensure the legitimacy of and support for institutions that benefit from public funding;

- teaches students how to function in a diverse world;
- broadens the talent pool from which the state can draw;
- enriches the quality of scholarship, atmosphere and climate at school or on campus;
- enhances the experiential and information base on which the state and the schools can draw to develop programs, policies, and practices that are responsive to a wide range of perspectives and needs;
- demonstrates compliance with state and federal law and ensures that individuals are treated fairly and with dignity; and
- helps to reduce inequality and disparities between and among groups and individuals.

## Miles To Go

A Robert Frost poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, contains a memorable phrase: “For I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep.” South Carolina also has promises to keep. Too many states have forgotten that the strength of our nation lies in its human capital, the hard working women, men and children who more often than not lack the visibility, resources or prestige to advocate persuasively and well in their own interest. Those who are their elected officials, their neighbors, friends, colleagues, employers, representatives and educators have “promises to keep,” to these South Carolinians, to themselves and to our nation.

It is the hope of the task force that South Carolina’s leaders will keep the promise to make equity and excellence in education and economic opportunity a reality. The state’s future depends on it.

miles to go

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